

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicant responds herein to the Final Office Action dated January 24, 2007. A Petition for Extension of Time (one month) and the fee therefor are submitted herewith.

Claims 1-3, 5-8 and 11-14 were rejected in the Final Office Action. Applicant canceled Claims 1-3 and 5-8 and amended Claims 11-14. Claims 11-14 remain in the Application.

Claim 11 was rejected in the Office Action under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Kamikawa (U.S. Patent No. 6,158,449). Reconsideration of the rejection is requested in view of the amendments to the claims herein and the following remarks.

Claim 11, as currently amended, recites an upper purge element positioned above the process chamber and supplying the inert gas downwardly and a lower purge element positioned below the upper purge element and discharging the inert gas in a direction substantially parallel to the surface of the processing liquid stored in the process tank. Thus, a uniform downflow is achieved in the process chamber.


Contrary to the claimed invention, Kamikawa discloses only one set of gas supply nozzles 44 which direct the airflow in an upward direction. Therefore, no uniform downflow can be achieved. Therefore, the above limitations on Claim 11 are not disclosed in the cited prior art, and Claim 11 is believed to define patentable subject matter.

Claims 12-14 were amended to depend on the independent Claim 11. Claims 12-14 are believed to be patentable over the cited prior art because of their dependency on the allowable Claim 11 and, further, on their own merits.

Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the application, allow the claims as amended and pass this case to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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ON APRIL 30, 2007


MAX MOSKOWITZ
Registration No.: 30,576
OSTROLENK, FABER, GERB & SOFFEN, LLP
1180 Avenue of the Americas
New York, New York 10036-8403
Telephone: (212) 382-0700